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No. 24



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

## No Record on July 2

Due to postal regulations that limit The Baptist Record to 50 issues per year, the newspaper will not print on July 2. The next issue will be dated July 9. All normal news and advertising deadlines for the issue of July 9 will remain in effect. The staff of The Baptist Record wishes you a happy Independence Day.

# Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Hurricanes: grim reminders to prepare

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP and local reports) — June signals the beginning of another hurricane season and residents near the Gulf Coast would do well to start preparing, especially if the names Katrina, Ike, and Gustav strike a scary chord.

Mickey Caison, a disaster relief leader at the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Ga., said preparedness is not only for the hurricane season but a planning process that families, churches, and local Baptist associations should undertake in advance of any possible disaster — whether a tornado in the South, a flood in the Midwest, an ice storm in New England, or even a swine flu pandemic.

"Families should be prepared in the event of any disaster that may isolate them for a period of time, knock off electricity or block roads," said Caison, NAMB's team leader for adult volunteer mobilization.

The Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, under the direction of the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson, has compiled a disaster preparation guide titled, *If a Disaster Strikes, Will I Be Prepared?*

The guide can be downloaded from the convention board web site, [www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org), by clicking on the guide's icon on the left side of the splash page.

Caison recommended that families develop a disaster plan and compile a supply kit to cover a minimum of three days.

The family survival kit would include one gallon of water per person per day; canned and packaged food; comfort food such as cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, instant coffee, and tea bags; a first-aid kit; equipment and tools including eating utensils; a battery-operated radio and flashlight with extra batteries; personal hygiene items; clothing and bedding; and special items like eyeglasses, copies of important family documents, cash, etc.

"Southern Baptist churches also need to prepare for disasters," Caison said.

Such preparations for churches could include creating a communications plan for linking the church with its members during a disaster and, in advance, building strong relationships with community resources such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and city and county emergency management personnel.

Also, churches can decide in developing a disaster plan if they want to be an Southern Baptist disaster relief operations center, a site for a feeding unit, or a temporary living shelter for disaster relief volunteers.

"At the same time, their disaster preparedness plan will help them in ways to minister both to their church members and to the community. If they don't have a plan, the church is just going to react to the situation," Caison said.

"A lot of times in a disaster, we'll call a church and ask if we can use their church to set up a feeding unit but their response is, 'We'll have to call a deacons' meeting or have a business meeting to decide.' We in disaster relief don't have time for that so we must go on to another church."

training event for families, including those who may not normally attend that church.

"The bottom line is that local churches are in a unique position to respond to individual needs in ways that no other organization or group can," Caison said. "Churches can demonstrate the love of Christ as they meet the needs of disaster victims. Even spontaneous reaction to a disaster in the church's community can be helpful if it's coordinated with the efforts of other disaster relief agencies."

Many of the same issues for disaster relief apply to a possible flu pandemic, Caison said. "How do you minister to your members and the community when flu pandemics call for mandatory rules against congregating? How will we get food to people when they are quarantined at home?"

"We're still extremely concerned about a swine flu pandemic although it's fallen off the radar screen for most folks now, but families and churches need to prepare for that as a potential disaster, too. The last time there was a major pandemic in 1918, it started in the winter, waned during the spring and summer, but came back with a vengeance in the fall. The reality is that next fall and winter, we have a high probability of significant flu."

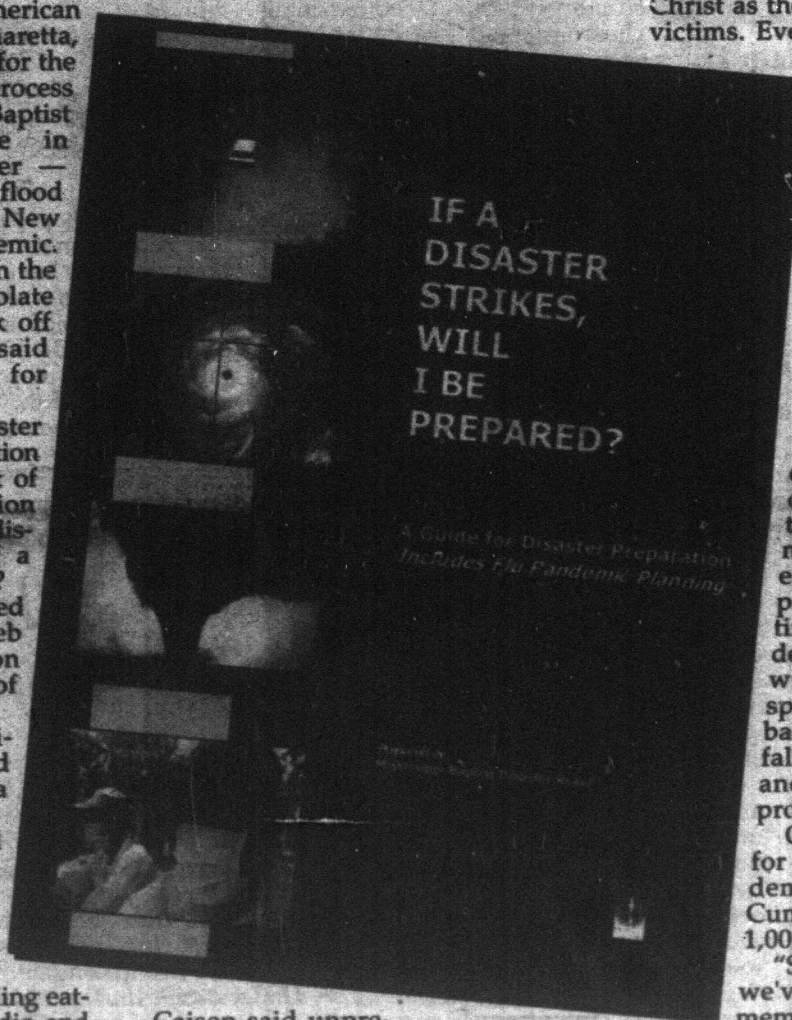
One church that is prepared for disasters, including a flu pandemic, is First Church in Cumming, Ga., which averages 1,000 people on Sundays.

"Since the swine flu outbreak, we've been emphasizing to our members that if we get into a pandemic situation, the most important thing our church needs to do is to stay healthy so we can serve our community," pastor Bob Jolly said.

To hammer that message home, Jolly said First Church recently held its first "No Handshake Sunday" during which members were encouraged to forgo handshakes in favor of what he described as "the holy elbow bump."

In the event of a flu pandemic, public gatherings would have to be cancelled, he said. "We've told our people that sermons would be online and that our webpage would be active and dynamic to communicate things they need to know. Our webpage would also include links to government, CDC (Centers for Disease Control), and NAMB disaster relief sites," he said.

For more information on disaster relief programs in Mississippi, contact the Men's Ministry Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: [cwright@mbcb.org](mailto:cwright@mbcb.org).



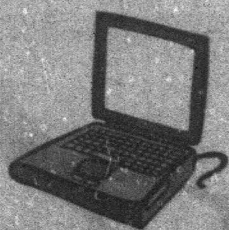
Caison said unprepared churches without plans lose a golden opportunity to position themselves, their ministries, and their facilities in the community.

"In having a strong relationship with community leaders in case of a disaster — before the disaster strikes — the SBC church will have a seat at the planning table," he said. "Churches will be in on the planning, know what's going to happen and know how you can be part of the response. Your church then becomes a viable part of the ministry of disaster relief following a disaster, but all these decisions and relationships need to be made beforehand," Caison said. "Community disaster relief agencies like the Red Cross or Salvation Army won't have time to come to you after the disaster happens and they won't have time for you to come to them."

Caison said churches that plan ahead for disaster response can use such opportunities for outreach in the community. For example, a church can partner with the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and local emergency management to offer a preparedness

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# Guy Gibson and the course of history

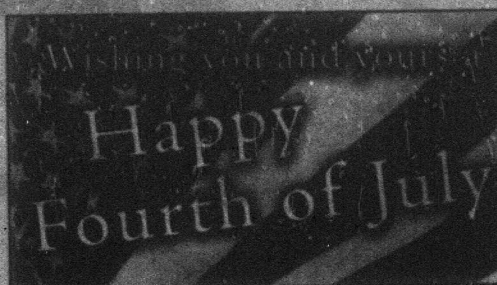
Guy Penrose Gibson was born in 1918 in India, the son of a British civil servant. An adventurous and self-confident lad, his story is worth retelling to a new generation of patriots.

Gibson was sent to England by his parents to be educated, and promptly joined the Royal Air Force at the age of 18. Pressed into service as a bomber pilot at the outbreak of World War II, he won the Distinguished Flying Cross by the age of 22 and skirted the mandatory six-month furlough after his first tour of duty by wrangling a transfer to fighter aircraft.

He promptly scored four kills as an airborne night fighter and was awarded a bar to his Distinguished Flying Cross. By the age of 23, Gibson had been promoted to the rank of wing commander and received a second posting as a bomber pilot, where he flew 172 sorties in 11 months before being chosen to lead one of the most secret and critically important campaigns of World War II.

Gibson was to direct the formation of the 617th Squadron. The men he recruited were not allowed to know the purpose of the squadron, which was to destroy the dams of the Ruhr Valley in Germany. The dams provided the Nazi industrial complex with copious amounts of hydroelectricity and water needed to prosecute the war.

On the night of May 16, 1943, a total of 19 bombers prepared to take off from an air base in England. Most of the members of the air crews did not expect to return; they had writ-



ten farewell letters to their wives and mothers. One of the pilots had scrupulously shaved and showered, because he said he wanted to die with dignity.

The toll was indeed high. Only 11 bombers returned. In that one night, 53 men were killed and three men were taken as prisoners of war. The goal of the mission was an unqualified success, however. The huge Mohne and Eder dams were breached and the Sorpe Dam was heavily damaged. Thousands of acres of rich farmland were inundated and unworkable, as well as scores of crucial industrial, communications, and utility facilities.

So shaken were the Germans that they began to concentrate large amounts of men and munitions to protect the country's remaining dams. In addition, the Nazi High Command was forced to divert labor and materials to the repair of the breached dams that had originally been slated for fortifications along the French Atlantic coast.

Military historians believe that the Dambuster Raid, as it came to be known, saved thousands of Allied soldiers' lives on the Normandy coast during the D-Day invasion. Because of the floods that followed the dam breaks, roads and bridges were washed

away. What little war materiel that survived the flood could not be quickly transported to the front.

Gibson and his raiders returned to England as heroes. Gibson was relieved of his command so he could go on a public relations tour with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Gibson was restless to return to active duty, however, and see the war to its end. His unrelenting requests to return to active duty were finally answered. Just a few months later, on September 19, 1944, Gibson's bomber did not return from a raid on Rhedyt, Germany. His airplane was found in the Dutch countryside, where a monument now stands to Gibson and his navigator who also perished in the crash. Gibson was 26 years old.

One of the morals of this story is that one person can indeed make a difference. Without Guy Gibson, there may well have never been a 617 Squadron. Without a 617 Squadron, there would have been no dam breaks. If there had been no dam breaks and the subsequent diversion of precious Nazi resources, the Allied forces at Normandy would likely have been driven back into the sea. It is not an overstatement to note that this one man altered the course of human history.

Most of us will never be called upon to pay the ultimate price for country, as did Guy Gibson, but even today there are many who are willing to do so. For those servicemen and servicewomen so far from home on Independence Day 2009, let us take time to voice a prayer of special thanksgiving for their sacrifices.

It is not an overstatement to note that they too are striving to change the course of human history.

Men and women with whom I've talked and ministered through the years have told me stories of hearing Christians share their disgust for homosexuals. Usually the person saying this had no idea that there was someone in the group who struggled with that issue.

If there is any trace of this attitude in your heart, you must be honest about that and do whatever it takes to overcome it. You might begin by acknowledging that this attitude is sin and is displeasing to our Father.

Secondly, we must examine our motives. Too often we can appear more concerned with defeating the homosexual agenda than we are with restoring broken lives. Are we genuinely driven by a desire to see captives set free? Do we see those who are set free as trophies of God's grace or proof that we're right in the culture war?

Our churches should be safe places for both those who struggle and those who love them. Here are five things your church should know:

• *Your church already has much of what it takes for this ministry.* At the 2003 Exodus Freedom Conference, Neil Whitehead discussed the question, "What is the most helpful thing in decreasing same-sex attraction?" Two different sur-

## GUEST OPINION:



### Churches and homosexuality

By Bob Stith  
Nashville

veys came up with the same answer: mentoring. This is basic Christian discipleship.

• *Understand that people aren't born that way.* The idea that homosexuality is genetically predetermined has been repeated so often that even many Christians have accepted it. People usually react with surprise or disbelief when told that not one scientifically accepted, replicable study has demonstrated this. On the other hand, several studies have demonstrated that change is possible.

• *Homosexuality isn't a choice.* In a LifeWay research survey, 90% of Southern Baptist pastors said that homosexuality is a choice. At this point, we must distinguish between behavior and desires or temptations. To act on a temptation is always a choice, but to have the temptation is not. Believers in Jesus Christ are not exempt

from the temptation of homosexuality. Being raised in the church does not guarantee immunity from this or any other temptation.

• *Quoting the Scriptures about homosexuality is not the solution.* Of course, it is important to be clear on what the Bible says, but usually the struggler already knows this. What they don't know is how to deal with the struggle. "What can you do to help me? What specific scriptural principles will help me get through this?" Our task force was formed to provide such scriptural resources.

• *You do have people who are impacted by this sin.* If you factor in the percentage of people in America who struggle with this sin, their parents, close relatives, and friends, you will find that conservatively speaking, from one-third to one-half of Americans

are directly impacted by this struggle. If we are not willing to lovingly and redemptively come alongside them, we may well lose them to homosexual activist groups. Neither condemnation nor silence will prevent this.

Evangelist Josh McDowell once said that "if your church is healthy, you will have people who are struggling with adultery, pornography, homosexuality, and other sins." He went on to explain that "if your church is healthy, God will send hurting people there to be healed."

In his 2003 report to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Phoenix, LifeWay President Jimmy Draper said, "Thousands of people long to be free from the struggle with homosexuality. God is looking for people who will reach out with His saving, healing love through Jesus Christ."

We pray you will make yourself available.

Stith, the SBC's National Strategist for Gender Issues, is available for speaking engagements and interviews and can be reached at [bstith@sbctheoutreach.com](mailto:bstith@sbctheoutreach.com). For more information about the SBC's outreach to homosexuals, visit [www.sbctheoutreach.com](http://www.sbctheoutreach.com). This column first appeared in SBC Life and is reprinted here courtesy of Baptist Press.



# Ancient Bibles collection displayed at SBC

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — Most Southern Baptists have a Bible within easy reach and many more on bookshelves or scattered throughout their homes. Harold Rawlings knows how to increase the value of those Bibles that often are taken for granted.

Midwestern Seminary's exhibit at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville, Ky., earlier this week featured a collection of ancient Bibles dating as far back as the 13th century.

Rawlings shared the story of how a few determined men risked their lives to produce Bibles in everyday, easily understood English in spite of laws forbidding it. "It was a costly struggle that resulted in the torture and death of hundreds of brave men and women who refused to buckle under threats of punishment," Rawlings said. "We are the privileged recipients of their noble deeds."

Rawlings' overview was presented at the seminary's exhibit hall booth in the Kentucky Exhibition Center in Louisville.

After retiring from years of pastoral ministry, Rawlings began thinking of ways he might encourage Christians in areas they know little about. "We all believe the Bible to be the most important book in the world, but few of us know how it came to us," he said.

By taking his collection of ancient Bibles on the road to churches and schools, Rawlings offers a visual illustration of the story he shares of lives lost in trying to get the Bible into English.

"People have taken the Bible for granted because

they've always had one or can easily get one if it is lost. Because of its availability we've lost a sense of its importance," he said. "That's what prompted me to gather this collection."

Among the Bibles displayed at the SBC exhibit:

- A Latin Vulgate that was handwritten on vellum around A.D. 1230 and served as the basis for John Wycliffe's translation.

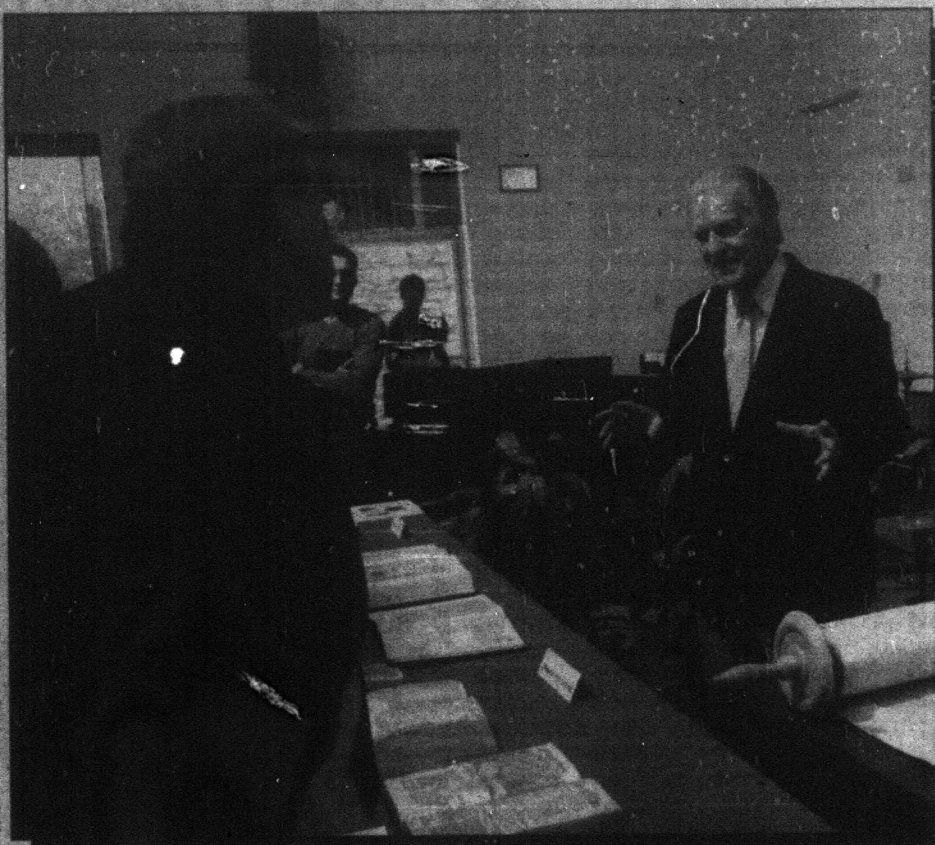
- The last of five editions of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, printed in A.D. 1535.

- William Tyndale's New Testament dated 1552 which served as the basis for all subsequent English versions

for the next 400 years. Many of these were confiscated and burned.

- A rare 1553 edition of Miles Coverdale's first complete Bible in the English language. It was the first Bible to be licensed by the king for distribution, completing the work of Tyndale who was martyred.

- A first edition of Matthew's Bible of 1537 produced by John Rogers, an associate of Tyndale who adopted a pseudonym in order to distribute the Bible.



BIBLE COLLECTION — Midwestern Seminary professor Alan Tomlinson (left) examines copies of antique Bibles displayed by Harold Rawlings. (BP photo)

- The Great Bible, a 1562 edition which revised Matthew's Bible. Described as great because of its size, it was produced under the guidance of Coverdale. It is also called the Chained Bible because copies were chained to the lectern or table in every parish church in England so people could either read it or hear it read.

- A first edition of the Geneva Bible printed in 1560 and made by William Whittingham and other English exiles in Geneva, Switzerland, during Queen Mary's reign in England. It was the Bible of Shakespeare, the Puritans, and the Pilgrim Fathers.

- The Bishop's Bible, first printed in 1568 and translated by a committee comprised largely of English bishops. It never replaced the unauthorized Geneva Bible in the hearts of the people.

- The third edition of the

King James Bible, which remains popular today.

Rawlings is the author of two books, *Basic Baptist Beliefs*, which addresses the doctrines that distinguish Baptists from most other religious groups, and *Trial by Fire* about the struggle to get the Bible into English.

He received a Ph.D. from Louisiana Baptist University, serves on Midwestern's advisory group called the board of regents, and has spoken on several occasions to chapel audiences at the Kansas City, Mo., campus.

The Rawlings Foundation, which he directs, continues to support the school financially.

"One reason I accepted the position of regent was that I felt the school's position on the Bible was very similar to mine. I was pleased that they were using it as the official textbook of the seminary, not questioning it, but being judged by the Scriptures," Rawlings said.

## Looking back

### 10 years ago

Mississippi native Dan Panter is named as associate director of International Mission Board work in southeast Asia and Oceania, a region including countries such as Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

### 20 years ago

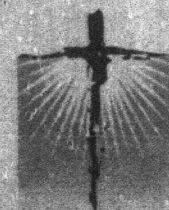
James W. Edwards is named interim president of William Carey College in Hattiesburg. Edwards was hired a month ago as WCC's temporary financial administrator after being retained by the Mississippi Baptist Education Commission to aid in their study of the school.

### 50 years ago

A group of Mississippi pastors and laymen, led by The Baptist Record editor W.C. Fields, worship at Gordon's Cavalry and the garden tomb on their trip to the Holy Land. Jerusalem's mayor, Rouhi Khateeb, joined the group for dinner.

## Benefits approved

WASHINGTON (BP) — U.S. President Barack Obama signed a memorandum June 17 giving homosexual partners of federal employees some of the benefits of married employees. "This presidential memorandum is just a start," Obama said at the signing. "Unfortunately, my administration is not authorized by existing federal law to provide same-sex couples with the full range of benefits enjoyed by heterosexual married couples. That's why I stand by my long-standing commitment to work with Congress to repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act. It's discriminatory, it interferes with states' rights, and it's time we overturned it." Critics say overturning DOMA would not only force the federal government to recognize same sex marriages from Massachusetts and other states, but could interfere with states' rights by forcing all 50 states to recognize same sex marriage. The Defense of Marriage Act has two main parts, one pertaining to the federal government and the other referencing the states. The section pertaining to the federal government states that "in determining the meaning of any Act of Congress, or of any ruling, regulation, or interpretation of the various administrative bureaus and agencies of the United States, the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife." The section that protects states says that "no state ... shall be required to give effect to any public act, record, or judicial proceeding of any other state ... respecting a relationship between persons of the same sex that is treated as a marriage."



MISSISSIPPI  
BAPTISTS

## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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No. 24



YOU CAN RESPOND  
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



## BIBLIOCIPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004  
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EKL TEZL GKNM RDZ,  
YSN NRSS JSRZKL DS,  
TENЕК: PMA ZN ZT  
HAZNSK, NRMG  
TREVN HMATRUZU NRS,  
VMAL NRO YML, EKL  
RZD MKVO TREVN  
NRMG TSACS.

VGBS PMGA: SZYRN

Clue: J = B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Sixteen: Sixteen

## IN APPRECIATION OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTERS

At churches all across our state, ministers of children and youth are at fever pitch of high velocity activity. Summer may be their busiest time but it is certainly not their only busy time, for so many of them do a magnificent job all year long. During the summer with Vacation Bible School, summer camps, trips, and special activities they are extremely busy. I recognize that not all of our churches have full-time ministers reaching out to guide, help, and care for children and youth in the fast-developing period of their lives and the days that are filled with so many major decisions. In spite of that, virtually every church has somebody or maybe a number of somebodies who have a natural inclination to care about the kids and special God-given abilities that enable them to do what they do in loving and sharing with the kids.

At the very beginning of summer, I was at several churches that were all geared up for Vacation Bible School. Then I was at a conference area where dozens of church vans and buses had brought loads of kids for a great experience not only with each other but also with the Lord. I saw dozens of youth ministers and caring and involved lay leaders as the conference was in progress. As I watched them interact with the young people, move about from place to place, and help all of the group get where they needed to be at the time they needed to be there, I thought about what a tremendous opportunity they were capturing in those young people. At the same time, I recognized a number of important facts to keep in mind as they do their work.

**My first thought had to do with stress.** The workers made sure that the kids were up early and the kids made sure that the workers stayed up late. As I watched what was taking place I recognized what the young people probably did not see or even care about, and that is the "big" folks were under great stress. When you take a group of kids, whether there are 10 or 110 in the group, the potential for something happening that would not be wanted or welcome is tremendous. There could be an injury, an emergency illness, someone wandering off or being left behind. If you stop and begin to think about it and calculate all of the possibilities of things that could go wrong, it could probably put parents and leaders in total shock mode.

If you analyze it closely enough, you might not even want your child going off to the activity but in all honesty, all of those things exist all of the time and yet you still not only

encourage but also demand that they go to school and encourage and sometimes demand that they be involved in social, academic, or athletic events that increase the dangers of life. For those who are in charge and the adult supervisors who are involved, it is a keep-you-awake, raise-your-blood-pressure, high-stress-level experience.

**I also thought about security.** I know that is a part of stress but it has a spot of its own because in our world with everything from terrorists to predators to even other misguided youth, obviously things could happen. I saw a church bus from one of our Mississippi communities and they were about to load up and head off to a meeting. Standing at the door of the bus were eight or 10 young teenage girls. I was walking by where they were and I spoke to them. Pointing to the church name on the bus, I asked them if that was where they were from and one of the girls with a big smile politely said that is where they were from, at which point the girl who was the security police in the group turned her back to me. Facing the other girls, she shook her finger and said in a loud whisper, "You are not supposed to speak to him."

Trying to cushion the awkwardness of the moment I responded to the girls by saying, "Well, are you here for a confer-

ence or on a mission trip?" One girl with a big smile and bright face said, "We are here this week for the Youth Conference." The security enforcer, still standing with her back to me, shook her finger again and said, "I said you are not suppose to speak to him." I waved and quickly moved on, telling them to have a great day. I recognized that I had broken their security instructions and was aware of how awkward it must have been for all of them. They did not know me and I did not feel at ease trying to explain to them my connection with their church, their pastor, or events at that church before they were probably even born. All they knew was a stranger in the parking lot was making conversation with them and they were not supposed to be doing that. In our world of people taking advantage of each other in so many different ways, it was only right that they be instructed to be alert and guarded.

It is a sad reality that so many children have their innocence robbed before they even get to kindergarten. Anyone

responsible for a group of young people or adults assisting in an event needs to be supportive of security measures. Do not treat such precautions lightly and do not be a part of encouraging, assisting, or even leading in the circumventing of security measures. Our children and youth want to have fun and indeed, they should be given that privilege. However, without proper care and concern, fun can instantly turn to disaster, heartbreak, and long-term sadness.

**A final thought about all of these summer activities has to do with spirituality.** I mention it last, though it is Priority One. The purpose of camps, schools, trips, and children and youth summer experiences is not just to keep them busy for a few days but also to focus their attention in fresh, meaningful ways on the Lord. While the above-mentioned things are certainly of concern, it is important that they not be allowed to sit at the forefront of everything that is happening. In a world of hurt, uncertainty, and even fear, it is of utmost importance that we keep pointing these young lives to Jesus. To each of you who are involved in youth activities this summer, thank you and may God richly bless you. Stay safe, care about the students, and stay vigilant to introduce them to Jesus.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).



## Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

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## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



3. Northside Church



4. Zion Church



5. Parkway Church

1. **Rocky Point Church, Leake County**, held its VBS June 1 - 5. Average attendance 85.

2. **Concord Church, Booneville**: July 7 - 11, 6 - 9 p.m.; pre-registration, June 27, 9 a.m.; call (662) 728-8384 for information.

3. **Northside Church, Vicksburg**, held its VBS June 8 - 12. Average attendance 110; 19 professions of faith. Shown are the participants.

4. **Zion Church, Pontotoc**, held its VBS June 12 - 13. Shown are the participants.

5. **Parkway Church, Kosciusko**, held its VBS June 1 - 5. Average attendance 74; one profession of faith. Shown are the participants.

6. **Hebron Church, Smithdale**, recently held its VBS, collecting \$935 to have Bibles translated for orphans in Ukraine. Shown are the participants and pastor Cletus Moak.

7. **Coldwater Church, Philadelphia**, held its VBS June 1 - 5. Shown are the participants.

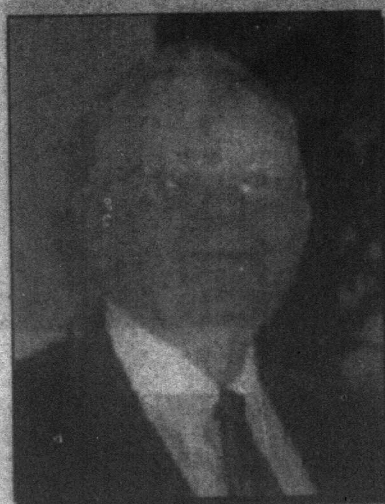


6. Hebron Church



7. Coldwater Church

## STAFF CHANGES



1. Riley



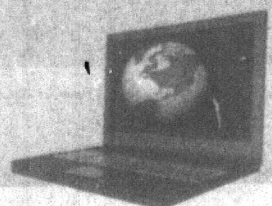
2. The Blairs

1. Bill Riley has been called as Associational Missions Director for Jasper County Association, beginning June 15.

2. Gore Springs Church, Gore Springs, has called Adam Blair as pastor. He is shown with his wife Amanda and children Logan and Emma.

3. Enon Church, Golden Triangle Association, has called Larry Haggard as pastor. He and his wife Susie began their ministry at the church Apr. 1. He is a graduate of Clarke College, Mississippi College, and New Orleans Seminary.

Visit us online at [www.mbc.org](http://www.mbc.org) to learn more about Mississippi Baptist opportunities.



## COLLEGE AND SEMINARY NEWS



1. WCU groundbreaking



4. MC campers

1. William Carey University broke ground recently for the Joe and Virginia Tatum Theater on the Hattiesburg campus. Shown are president Tommy King, the Tatums, and Obra Quave.

2. New Orleans Seminary president Chuck Kelley was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from William Carey University at the school's spring commencement in May.

3. The Fair-Asbury School of Nursing invites the public to an open house July 17, 5 - 8 p.m., on the Hattiesburg campus. For more information, call (601) 318-6147 or 318-6301.

4. Students from First Church, Troy, spent five days on the Mississippi College campus for a summer camp. Nearly 10,000 summer campers participate in camps at MC each year. Shown, front, are Gabe Wilson, Jaycie Smith, Sara Grace Colbert, and Hayes Wilson; standing, Kim Wilson, Jamie Wilson, and Christie Smith.





2. The Laufers



3. Deel ordination



4. Flat Top Unity Church



5. First Church, Oloh, note burning



## MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

1. Concord Church, Pelahatchie, is hosting the Mark Trammel Trio in concert July 5, 7 p.m. A love offering will be received.

2. First Church, Mt. Olive, recognized pastor Steve Laufer upon his receiving a PhD degree from New Orleans Seminary. Shown is Laufer and his wife, Jana.

3. Twin Lakes Church, Madison, ordained Lewis Deel as deacon May 31. Shown are Frankie Deel, Deel, and pastor Hugh Smith.

4. The Busy Bees Children's Ministry group of Flat Top Unity Church, Pearl River Association, collected \$765.95 for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering by decorating and distributing pint jars to church members. Shown are the participants.

5. First Church, Oloh, held a note burning service May 31. Shown are pastor James Moore, Dennis Aultman, Arlene Aultman, Delton Raybourn, Betty Raybourn, Ashton Barefoot, Nancy Chain, and Glenneth Fillingame. The church also held a baby and child dedication May 31.

6. New Prospect Church, Olive Branch, recently commissioned Leigh White as a Mission Service Corps volunteer. She and her family will be serving in Wyoming. Shown are pastor Bob Curtis, White, Chris White, and children Jordan and Jacob.

7. Zion Hill Church, Wesson, licensed Will Milo Parsons to preach Apr. 19. Shown are pastor Tom McCormick and Parsons.

8. Remus Church, Leake County association, recently celebrated their annual homecoming which included a note burning ceremony. Shown is deacon Jim Freeny burning the note.

9. Sunrise Church, Carthage, recognizes its Bible drillers: Lisa Addy, Aerial M. Green, Cole Estep, Grace Addy, and Joan Thornton.



6. White commissioning



7. Parsons licensing



8. Freeny, Remus Church



9. Sunrise Church



## JUST FOR THE RECORD



10. Stronghope Church

10. Stronghope Church, Wesson, held a baby dedication recently. Shown are Timmy & Sarah Barlow with Jackson, and Carrie Butler Boyd with Blair.

11. Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg, honored their 8th grade and senior graduates April 26 with a new Bible and reception. Shown are Hayley Cawthon, Catlin Harris, Brandon Swilley, Aron Spiers, and Autum Harris.

12. First Church, Greenwood, recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown, front row, are Mary Upchurch, Bethany Tillman, Leigh-Anne Liegey, Abigale Lake, and Madison Deloach; back row, Andrew Liegey, Thomas Dillard, Wilson Blunden, and Debra Miller.

13. Members of First Church, Marks, and West Marks Church, Marks, participated in a Walk for Life recently, for the Crisis Pregnancy Center fundraiser of North Delta Association. Shown are the participants.

14. Lakeshore Church, Jackson, recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown are Brenden Lyall, Lillian Walters, and Gavin Lyall.

15. Hermanville Church, Hermanville, recently celebrated its 125th anniversary. Shown is Ken Cook presenting a certificate to Buddy Howard.

16. Members of Gaston Church, Booneville, recently spent four days on the Blue Mountain College campus landscaping, relocating a water line, shaping a dirt bank, clearing the Big Dell, sodding the dirt bank, and removing trees. The group did this in partnership with the Gaston youth group, Prentiss County Disaster Relief Team, and Eubank Construction Inc. Shown are some of the participants.



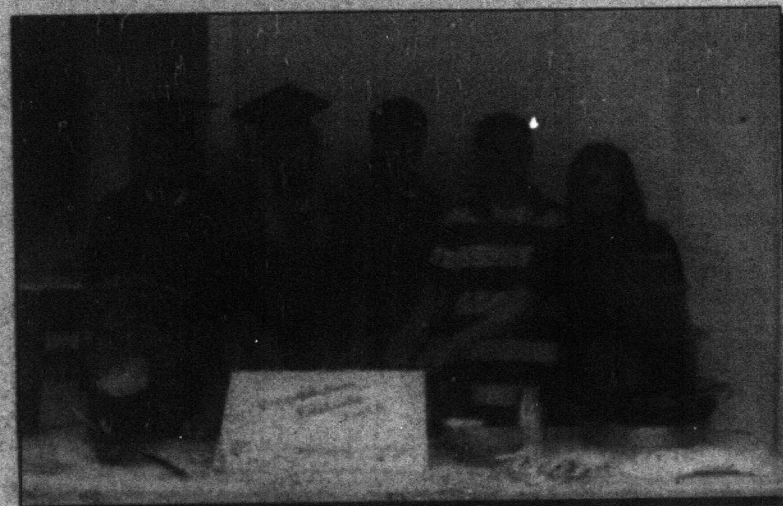
14. Lakeshore Church Bible drillers



15. Hermanville Church



16. Gaston Church, Booneville



11. Lakeside Church graduates



12. First Church, Greenwood, Bible drillers



13. First Church and West Marks Church, Marks

## REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. Bethel Church, Water Valley: Revival, July 12 - 15; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Ken Boyette, speaker; Casey Gerber, music.

2. Poplar Springs Church, Newton: Revival, June 28 - July 1; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; James L. Spencer, speaker; Jim and William Savell, music.

3. Cold Springs Church, Collins: Revival, July 19 - 24; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the ground and afternoon gospel sing; Mon. - Fri., 7 p.m.; Bill Saye, speaker.

4. Crystal Springs Church, Tylertown: Revival, June 28 - July 1; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by

lunch and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Gene Douglas, speaker; Steve Bishop, music.

5. McCall Creek Church, McCall Creek: 100th anniversary, July 12; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; all former pastors and members welcomed.

6. Union Church, Union Church: Revival, July 19 - 22; Sun., 11 a.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Phil and Teri Bradley, revival team; M.R. Bradley, pastor.

7. Palestine Church, Harrisville: Homecoming, June 28; Services, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; David Parker, speaker; The Parkers, music.



# K.C. Royals dump pro-life promotion after complaints

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP and local reports) — Missouri's largest and oldest grassroots pro-life organization feels discriminated against by the Kansas City Royals due to a series of events leading up to the removal of their organization's name in conjunction with a June 19 group ticket purchase for a game against the St. Louis Cardinals at Kauffman Stadium.

Missouri Right to Life, which controlled a block of more than 300 tickets as part of a fundraiser, was mentioned on the Royals' website before being pulled due to complaints by a couple of outspoken pro-abortion advocates.

It may have been only two anti-life activists who managed to politicize the way the Royals do marketing and influence the team's ultimate decision, according to Susan Klein, Right to Life legislative liaison and wife of Dusty

Klein, pastor of Cedar Grove Church in Holts Summit.

"I think we feel discriminated against," Susan Klein said.

According to The Pitch, a liberal Kansas City tabloid, Scott Hartley, district aide for Democratic Missouri State Sen. Jolie Justus of Kansas City, labeled Right to Life "controversial" and argued that the Royals should distance themselves from Right to Life for the purpose of being "inclusive."

That was followed by Peter Brownlie, head of Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, calling the Royals to complain that mentioning Right to Life on the Royals website was "insensitive" in light of the recent killing of Kansas Abortionist George Tiller, the Kansas City Star reported.

Planned Parenthood is the nation's largest provider of abortions, and local affiliates have been caught on tape

numerous times offering to facilitate abortions for underage girls and otherwise violate legal restrictions on abortion.

When the end result was the removal from the website of the phrase, "Right to Life," in the context of trying to increase group ticket sales in the days leading up to the game, Klein saw it for what it was.

"It seems like pro-abortion people are controlling the Royals," she said.

Klein said it is absurd to punish Right to Life in this manner for the death of Tiller. Right to Life "condemned what the murderer of Tiller did," she said. A June 1 statement by the state organization's president, Pam Fichter, indicated that "we have always and will always oppose violent acts in response to the violence of abortion."

"There's no reason to tie the two together," Klein said. "We're a group of people trying to attend a ballgame who happen to be pro-life."

The June 19 outing was organized by Right to Life's Western Region, which sold 58

tickets on the Royals online service and another 261 out of a block of 300 originally purchased, Klein said.

Their intent over the years has been to support Kansas City's professional sports teams and do volunteer work, she said. For example, the group has worked concessions for the Royals and helped clean up Arrowhead Stadium for the Kansas City Chiefs.

"We're just regular people like everybody else," Klein said.

One post on prime buzz, where a Kansas City Star columnist on June 16 wrote about the Royals finding themselves "in the midst of abortion politics," posed the rhetorical question, "If the Royals have a Price Chopper night does that mean they don't support Sun Fresh?" Or, would a Sprint night mean "they think Verizon is bad?"

Marketing is not political, the poster known as WoodyKC reasoned. He saw Right to Life being denied a place on the website due to "potential negative marketing impact."

The Royals' website is designed to inform fans that there are hundreds of group events each season. Precise language detailing those opportunities, including the one afforded Right to Life on June 19, is as follows:

"We offer special ticket discounts, block seating, parades, scoreboard recognition, ceremonial First Pitch opportunities and a whole lot more! We'll make sure your group feels right at home here at the ballpark!"

"Below is a listing of just a few of our special events already planned this season—check and see if your group event is already on our calendar. If not, call us at (816) 504-4040 and plan an outing today! As you'll see from the variety of events, everyone is welcome at Kauffman Stadium. You invite the guests, we'll do the rest... it's that simple!"

Phil Gloyer, chairman of the Christian Life Commission of the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC), the largest evangelical denomination in the state and one with a decidedly pro-life flock, wondered whether the Royals may have been manipulated into an awkward position.

"I'm a little concerned about the suggestion that a state senator's aide would involve himself in the Royals' marketing strategy, and frankly, to alienate pro-life baseball fans is a bizarre strategy," Gloyer said. "It is hard to imagine a competent marketer caving to one or two phone calls instead of just pointing them to the team's 'everyone is welcome' standard."

The Royals would like to be known as an organization that welcomes Christian fans to the ballpark for promotions like Faith & Family Day at the K, a June 14 game against the Cincinnati Reds that also featured a concert by MercyMe, but in reality it is problematic for Christian journalists to get credentials.

Lee Warren, a Baptist Press freelance writer from Omaha, Neb., was told in 2007 that the organization had "some discomfort" with him talking to Royals players about their faith because it may be offensive to other players in the clubhouse.

Warren explained that his intent was to simply interview players who were known to be Christians. The request for a credential was eventually approved.

"There's apprehension to credential me as a Christian journalist, and I don't know why," Warren said. "I've written six or more articles on the Royals going back to 2004, and only in 2007 did I start to have problems getting in there."

On more than one occasion, Baptist Press and The Pathway, the MBC news journal, have been forced to go the extra mile to justify why they want to be in the clubhouse to interview Christian players. The most recent example of how hard it is for Christian media to cover these events came when Royals officials first promised The Pathway access to the June 14 faith event and then denied it.

The Pathway placed two calls to Mark Tilson, vice president of sales and marketing for the Royals, which were not returned as of press time.

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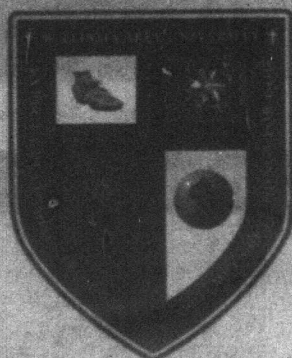
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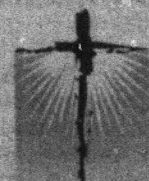
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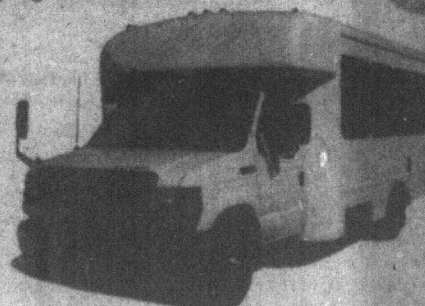
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# So. Baptists in Maine take on same sex marriage law

AUGUSTA, Maine (BP) — If California can do it, then so can Maine.

That's at least what Carole Edgerly of Farmington Church in Maine believes. She's leading an effort in her church to gather signatures for a "People's Veto" in hopes of overturning the state's recently-passed law legalizing same sex marriage.

She and others like her are looking to California — a left-leaning state that that banned same sex marriage last November — for inspiration. "We [also] are up against a very liberal state," Edgerly, a pastor's wife, told Baptist Press. "Everything that starts out on the West Coast ends up on the East Coast. We're not giving up."

Farmington Church is one of hundreds of Protestant and Catholic churches statewide that are working against a two-month deadline to gather 55,000 signatures to put the question of same sex marriage on the November ballot. The Democratic-controlled legislature and Democratic governor recently approved the law, but thanks to a unique section of the state constitution, that's not the end of the story.

The People's Veto law allows citizens to gather signatures — 55,000 are needed this year — to overturn any recently enacted law. The same sex marriage law has yet to go into effect and won't do so until the signature effort fails or citizens OK such unions.

The People's Veto has been implemented fairly frequently throughout the state's history, including last year when voters rejected a law that would have partially financed the state's subsidized health care system with new taxes on liquor, wine, and soft drinks.

This year's People's Veto, though, likely will receive far more attention than past ones.

The clock already is ticking on the effort. Technically, supporters have 90 days after the legislature adjourns — it's scheduled to do so as early as this weekend — to gather the signatures but if they wait that long, the veto won't be on the ballot until next summer, and they want it on the ballot this November.

With that in mind, they need to finish collecting the signatures by the end of July, if possible.

Maine is being watched closely nationwide by both sides of

the issue, not only to see if the signature drive succeeds, but also to test voters' sentiments in a corner of the country — the Northeast — that has never had a statewide vote on same sex marriage. Although voters in 30 states have voted on the issue, with all 30 voting against same sex marriage, the Northeast has been a holdout mostly because left-leaning legislatures have refused to put the matter on the ballot.

Of the five New England states that have legalized same sex marriage, Maine is the only one where citizens can have a direct say, unimpeded by the legislature.

Farmington Church, a Southern Baptist congregation, has placed petitions in the church foyer and, Edgerly says, "people have been signing." Hosanna Church in Oxford, Maine, is another church that is offering the petitions to its members. Dallas E. Henry, who serves as board of directors president for the Maine Family Policy Council, is a pastor at Hosanna.

"People are excited and gathering significant numbers of signatures," he said. "They are sickened by the fact that the legislature keeps voting for these laws that the people of Maine do not want. They are frustrated, very frustrated."

There's been little polling done in the state on the issue, although a Pan Atlantic SMS Group poll of 400 Maine adults in April found that given three options, 39% supported same sex marriage, 34.5% supported same-sex civil unions and 23% opposed all legal recognition for homosexual couples.

Henry, who has helped collect signatures for past People's Veto efforts, said participation by churches on this year's effort is "very critical."

"I believe the church will probably either make or break it," he said.

Although church participation on issues of legislation and morality has widely been viewed as legal under IRS tax-exempt status code, a self-labeled homosexual civil rights organization, the Empowered Spirits Foundation, filed a complaint in May with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) claiming that the Catholic Diocese of Portland violated IRS law by publicly backing the proposed People's Veto, Maine Public Broadcasting Network reported.

Catholic diocese officials say they are following the law, and religious freedom attorneys have discounted the complaint as a harmless threat meant to intimidate churches into not participating.

"IRS regulations are very clear that a church is allowed to support or oppose legislation, including initiatives and referendums, as long as it does not constitute a substantial part of the church's activities," Erik Stanley, an attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund, a legal organization, told Baptist Press.

"Basically, if it's under about 15% of a church's activities overall, a church is allowed to do that. That's such a high threshold. Most churches never have more than that."

A church, Stanley said, can gather signatures, address the issue from the pulpit and even take a church vote to formally

endorse the People's Veto effort.

"All of that is perfectly permissible," he said. "No one is going to get in trouble with the IRS for doing that."

Henry, the Hosanna Church pastor, believes participation by the state's Catholic leaders can play a critical role, particularly if the issue makes it on the ballot. It's the first time, he said, that the Catholic diocese has officially participated in a statewide ballot on homosexuality.

The diocese chose not to take an official stance on past initiatives involving laws that placed sexual orientation alongside race in the law for protected classes.

If the People's Veto does qualify for the ballot, then the public debate particularly TV and radio ads likely will follow the lead that conservatives in California set. From the get-go last fall, supporters of California Proposition 8 argued that if same sex marriage remained legal it would be taught as normative in the public schools. Henry points to Massachusetts, where a second-grade class in Lexington was read a book (King & King) about a prince "marrying" another prince, despite objections from parents.

"When homosexuality laws, especially gay marriage laws, have passed, then it opens the door to all kinds of other things that no one dreamed it would do," he said. "It has a secondary effect that they didn't expect to happen."

Joey Marshall, pastor of Living Stone Community Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Standish, Maine, also has concerns about the law's effect.

"Same-sex marriage not only goes against our biblical convictions, but it also destroys the values of traditional families in Maine," he told BP. "My 17-month-old daughter has already watched a commercial featuring a lesbian household. This commercial aired just moments after the governor signed the bill into law. We are deeply concerned about the long-term effects that same-sex marriage will have on our children and grandchildren."

Marshall's church sent representatives to the state capital to speak out against the bill when it was debated and now will help gather signatures to, they hope, help overturn the law. He is preaching through 1 Corinthians, a book that deals with homosexuality and "God's design for marriage," he said. The church also has set up a table with petitions that Marshall is encouraging members to sign.

Edgerly, of Farmington Church, said Christians "need to take a stand on God's Word."

"We are very privileged to live in a state where the people have the last word," she said. "In some of the states, a court decided [the issue of gay marriage] and in other states the legislature decided but in Maine, the legislature makes their decision, the governor makes his decision, and then the people have the right to veto."

*Editor's note: For more information about the Maine People's Veto signature drive, visit [MaineMarriage.net](http://MaineMarriage.net) and [StandforMarriageMaine.com](http://StandforMarriageMaine.com).*

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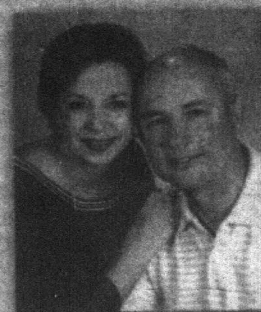
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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

### Confidently Victorious

I John 5:12-21

By Lori Clendinning

Recently, my church invited a man to share his testimony. Twenty years ago Don Piper was killed in a car accident, stood at the gates of Heaven, and ninety minutes later was returned to live on earth in order to bear witness to all that he had experienced. Our church was filled to overflowing with people from all over Mississippi who came to find out if Heaven is real.

Piper's testimony was an unmistakable example of this lesson's theme: he was confidently victorious! His words were compelling, as he stood and shared, full of assurance that Heaven is real, that Jesus is the only way to get there, and there's room for all who will put their faith and trust in Him.

Our lesson this week in I John reveals that God intends for all Christians to have that assurance of eternal life. He desires for us to have confidence in approaching Him in prayer, and we can be certain of victory over sin. In other words, we should know that we know that we know.

More than any other passage in the New Testament, John uses the verb "know" repeatedly in I John to emphasize that we can be certain things that God delivers. In 2:3 we know that we know God, in 2:5, we know that we are in Him. We know that when He appears we shall be like Him, 3:2; we know we've passed from death to life, 3:14. In 3:19, we know that we are of the truth, we know that God abides in us, 3:24; we



know that we abide in Him, 4:13. In 5:13, John writes that we know we have eternal life, we know that God hears us, 5:15, and we know that we are of God in 5:19.

Yet, disregarding what the Bible says, many people who lack confidence seek solutions in this success-oriented culture. The Internet offers tips on acting confident, offering up a "fake it, 'til you make it" approach. By smiling and acting self-assured, some claim you might actually begin to feel confident, and that feeling will help you achieve success in your business endeavors.

Sadly, some Christians fake confidence in spiritual matters. Although you would never know it by looking at them in church, they are filled with doubts. Many wonder if they will go to Heaven when they die, or if God really hears their prayers, or if they will ever break free from the

stronghold of sin.

How many Christians move through this world, not energized by what they know, but rather, discouraged or in despair because of a lack of "feeling." Bible scholar Henry Halley wrote that we should be careful "to identify assurance with salvation, for a new-born babe scarcely knows it has been born, but it has. Assurance comes with growth."

As a Christian grows through Bible study, prayer and by living out his or her faith in this world, then true assurance takes hold in their life. As we willingly and obediently allow God to change us to become more like Christ, we do not have to doubt whether we possess eternal life, we can be certain.

Likewise, we can be confident as we approach God in prayer. We can pray, earnestly and honestly, knowing that God hears us. God wants us to pray to Him with boldness, just as little children who run and jump into their parent's

arms, sharing the day's treasures and trials.

God wants us to pray for one another, especially for those who are still struggling with sin. There are three approaches to explain the "sin that brings death" in verse 16: that sin may be a 1) specific, deadly sin; 2) blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; or 3) total rejection of the Gospel. Regardless, we as believers are commanded to pray, pray, and pray for them.

We know it is by God's power that we are kept from the evil one who controls the world. We belong to God and God can be known by us. We are assured that eternal life is obtained only through Jesus. Our security comes in knowing that we rest safely in Jesus' hands and He has the power to overcome sin.

Our victory is sure as we remain confident in Him. May we all bear testimony that He is risen, indeed!

Lori Clendinning is a member of First Baptist Church, Brandon.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Claim Your Freedom

Galatians 5:1-15

By Jim Burnett

How does it feel to know that every sin you have ever committed and will ever commit has been forgiven? How does it affect you to realize that absolutely nothing in life or even death has the power to separate you from the awesome love and affection of your heavenly Father? How does knowing that one day Jesus will stand at heaven's door and welcome you into glory impact your thoughts and actions?

The lesson today begins a three-week emphasis on the topic of a Christian's freedom in Christ and the multi dimensions of this freedom.

#### Understand Your Freedom

(Galatians 5:1a)

God's requirements for your salvation were met upon your confession of Christ Lord and Savior. Consequently, absolute-

ly nothing else needs to be done now or in the future by you or anyone else to obtain and retain your salvation. You are indeed free to live in the glorious and liberating truth that all your sins are forgiven, that death is no longer your enemy, and that your life can now count for God. As Paul said so clearly to the Romans, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Romans 8:1 NIV). You and I are free.

#### Accept Your Freedom

(Galatians 5:1b-6)

There is a saying among mechanics: "don't fix it if it isn't broken." Within our human nature we are internally wired with the desire to tinker and tamper with things that sometimes are working just fine. As a young boy, I once took apart a well-functioning

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tampering with a much more serious item than a pellet gun. They were making changes and adjustments to God's solo path to salvation: faith in Jesus. In essence, Paul said they had "fallen from grace". He did not mean, however, that these Christians had lost their salvation, but that they had detoured from the doctrine of being saved by grace and had substituted it with being saved by works.

Anytime a Christian begins believing that his or her salvation is derived from performance, he or she has fallen from grace doctrinally. In other words, we do not attend church so God will love us but because God already loves us and we

pellet rifle. Upon reassembling the firearm, to my chagrin, I noticed some extra parts: spring, screw, washer, etc. I had attempted to fix what wasn't broken. Consequently, that gun never fired again.

love Him. We perform good works not to be saved by those good works but because we are saved unto good works. If you have accepted Jesus, then Jesus has accepted you. His love for you is perfect and permanent.

#### Retain Your Freedom

(Galatians 5:7-12)

Personally understanding and accepting the freedom that Christ offers you is essential. But so is retaining this freedom. The Galatian believers unfortunately had allowed their freedom in Christ to be stripped from them through the evil influence of heretical teachers. Christian freedom is something we must hold onto, maintain, and preserve. The Devil will do everything within his power and use every scheme at his disposal to bring you into bondage. Your freedom in Christ over sin, death, and self is a stench in the nostrils of Satan. He hates the fact that you are a child of God, and he will work overtime to steal your birthright of freedom. So be smart, and "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls

around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (I Peter 5:8 NIV).

Guilt trips can devour believers. When past failures and mistakes are allowed to loop through our minds, freedom vanishes. Sometimes religious and denominational expectations can cause our knees to buckle and our freedom to exit. So when you become weary and burdened, run to Jesus for rest. Take his yoke upon you, for in doing so you will find a fresh supply of freedom for your soul.

#### Live In Your Freedom

(Galatians 5:13-15)

Freedom for Christians does not mean God has handed out permission slips allowing us to live and behave any way we desire. On the contrary, through the freedom that Christ has given us, we can now live and should live for His cause and for His glory instead of our own. So go ahead and live in the liberty that Christ has brought you. Serve God and others with deep joy.

Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.

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## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

### Getting to Know the Father

Exodus 33:18-23; 34:5-8; Micah 6:6-8; John 4:21-24

By Lori Clendinning

Perhaps you've heard of the three blind men who came across an elephant for the first time: each of them thought the elephant to be something it was not because they were touching a different part of the elephant, one laid hands on the smooth tusk, another had hold of the wispy tail, while the third felt only the elephant's rough skin. They could not know the entire elephant because they were limited in their experience.

Likewise, people can miss experiencing God, because they do not know Him fully. They can go through all the external motions that are generally associated with being a Christian and still hardly know God at all.

This study about God focuses on three important questions

meant not only to help adults know more about God, but also to lead them to God: How can we know the Father? What is the Heavenly Father like? What does God the Father desire for us? By reflecting on God's characteristics, we grow in our devotion to Him. God desires for us to know Him and to worship Him.

How can we know the Father? Let's examine the life of one who intimately knew God: Moses, a Levite who led a race of slaves and created from them a powerful nation, God's chosen people.

As the spiritual leader of the Jewish nation, Moses was overjoyed that God's presence was with them for their desert journey. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God revealed Himself, but with some restric-



Clendinning

tions: God allowed Moses to see His Glory, which is called in Hebrew "kabod" (the weight and honor of something). In this case, kabod refers to God's character and fullness.

Moses was only allowed to see the moving presence of God, because no man, despite his fidelity to God, could handle the fullness of God's being. Even so, the mere passing of God impacted Moses in a dramatic way. God allowed Moses to get closer to Him than any other human and His shikinah glory reflected on Moses' countenance.

Whatever we may understand about God, there is always much more of Him to be known and experienced. We should continually seek to know Him better. We know of God only what He graciously chooses to reveal to us. Being in the presence of God is no trivial matter. We should worship God with a sense of awe, reverence, and mystery.

So, what is the Heavenly Father like? As God passed in front of Moses, He proclaimed His name and described His nature. His holiness and righteousness was expressed through His divine presence, and Moses yearned to know God fully.

Sin separates us from knowing God, yet God still provided a way for us to know Him, because of Jesus' sacrifice and God's forgiveness of our sin. Because God is willing to forgive our sin, we should confess and repent of our sins.

Because God is a God of justice, we should not look at our sin casually. Ours should be lives that are changed because of God's redemption of our sins. Worship is the proper response to God's revelation of Himself. Outward service is an act of worship and our lives, like Moses, should reflect our devotion to God through our obedience to His calling.

What does God the Father desire for us?

In Micah, God revealed to the prophet that He desires

more than external acts of piety; He requires righteousness in human relationships and humility in our relation to Him. In John's Gospel, Jesus said God wants people to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

People do many things trying to please God and they often end up missing what it is that they are supposed to do. God wants us to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him. For some people, this means going to church and doing a few good deeds here and there.

As good as that might be, participating in worship services is not enough; worship must be accompanied by right attitudes and right living. True worship flows from hearts that are right with God and lives that are consistent with the truth of the Scriptures. Being a godly person who shows mercy to others and a personal commitment to God is the right form of worship.

Lori Clendinning is a member of First Baptist Church, Brandon.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

### Follow The Spirit

Galatians 5:16-26

By Jim Burnett

Do you remember as a child playing the game follow the leader? Wherever the designated leader went you went. Whatever the designated leader did you did.

Today's lesson focuses on the importance of Christians following the leader: the Holy Spirit. To be sure, His guidance always leads us toward God and unto godliness.

#### Walk Behind The Spirit (Galatians 5:16-18)

Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit of God is not only with the Christian in every life endeavor, He actually dwells inside of the Christian, functioning as a spiritual guide and compass. Our task is to daily allow the Spirit to not only be resident in our lives but president of our lives.

Paul encouraged the

Galatians to walk by the Spirit and by doing so they would overcome fleshly tendencies. Walking by the Spirit simply means yielding our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies to godly purposes. Consequently when a believer is full of the Spirit, he or she will have little or no room for fleshly pursuits. There is a direct correlation between our obeying the spirit and our ability to overcome personal sin.

How do we know when we are being led of the Spirit or walking behind the Spirit? The Holy Spirit always guides us toward God-honoring actions and attitudes, never leading us to do anything contrary to the character of Christ and the standards of God.

#### Avoid Forbidden Trails (Galatians 5:19-21)

Paul delineated to the



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Galatians the perverted paths and forbidden trails they should avoid if they desired to honor God. He gives a litany of activities to be shunned by Christ followers. Perusing verses 19-21, you will see a portrait of a person who is completely out of God's will and who shows no signs of a personal relationship with Christ. It is a character sketch of someone unattached to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit always directs believers down the pathway of holiness and the trail of truth. But when you stray from The Way, and we all do at times, the Holy Spirit will flag you down, warn you of treacherous roads ahead, and reroute you back to the narrow path of obedience.

Study Paul's list of dishonorable activities of the godless and allow the Holy Spirit to do a character scan of your heart. If something surfaces in your life that is displeasing to God, confess it and abandon it immediately.

#### Display All The Spirit's Fruit (Galatians 5:22-26)

Paul paints a perfect portrait of what a healthy, normal Christian looks like in verses 22-26. Interestingly these passages epitomize the life Christ lived while on earth. Through His words and His actions He bore all the fruit of the Spirit, and so should we.

When your life is under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit you will love unconditionally; you will have deep joy; you will possess a peace that defies comprehension; you will practice patience; you will be kind; you will possess moral goodness, you will be faithful; you will be gentle; and you will demonstrate self-restraint. In other words, you will be a living fruit stand for Jesus, daily displaying to the world Christ-like character and behavior.

The fruit of the Spirit should generate from all Christians not just a few. The ability to produce this godly fruit has been given to all of God's children at spiritual birth. But again the bearing of

this fruit in our lives is proportionate to our obedience to Christ. Jesus said "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 NIV).

As you inventory the fruit of the Spirit in your life, which characteristics are missing? Is your love for others qualitative? Are you waiting for some people to measure up to your expectations before accepting them? How are you doing in the area of joy? Have you allowed the circumstances of your life to overwhelm you and put you in a fog of depression? What about patience? Are you angry at God's timing in your life? Check out each piece of spiritual fruit Paul mentions in verses 22-26 and determine whether or not you are displaying such fruit in your life. After all, as someone has said, being children of the King, shouldn't we bear a family resemblance?

Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.

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# Christians forced to flee home country during unrest

TEHRAN, Iran (BP) — Davoud (not his real name) felt so disillusioned with life that he sank into a deep depression.

He wasn't destitute. Far from it. Davoud was successful in Iran's entertainment industry. He brokered motion picture deals and created artwork that hung above fireplaces in the capital city of Tehran.

He had a good home life. He loved his wife. He knew he should be happy, but he felt hollow inside like nothing really mattered. He tried to push the feelings aside by burying himself in work but they kept creeping back, weighing heavier each time.

My life "was meaningless because my heart was empty," Davoud recalls.

## Tolerating religion

He shrugged it off when a friend told him the reason for his depression was that Christ was missing from his life. Most Iranians know of Jesus Christ because He is believed to be one of many Islamic prophets. For Iranians to try to convince others in the Islamic Republic that He is more than that can be punishable by prison or death.

When other friends accepted Christ, Davoud and his wife Susan (not her real name) still weren't interested. Fear wasn't their primary reason for rejecting Christ; it was disdain for religion of any sort.

When Davoud and Susan got married, they agreed that religion was something to be tolerated at special occasions. Both of their families followed religious practices out of obligation and necessity. It was clear to the couple that religion as they knew it had nothing to do with the heart.

Susan was caught off-guard by the joyful outlook of a friend who had accepted Christ. Up to this point, religion and religious people — including her extended family of strict Muslims — seemed cold and removed.

Finally Susan's curiosity piqued. She wondered who God really is, and her friend seemed to know. When her friend led her to Christ a short time later, "It was love, real love, pure love," Susan said.

## Time of discovery

Susan's face softens into a deep, lingering smile when recalling her discovery of God's love. "When I pray to God and when I think, I can talk to God directly," she said. "At that time I can understand how God loves me and how much I love Him."

Growing up, Susan felt "always behind a barrier so you cannot touch a real God but in Christianity, I can reach Him very easily. I'm always open to hear Him, to interact with Him."

Davoud's first thought when Susan told him about becoming a Christian was, "Don't react. After a while, she's going to forget [her impulsive decision] and everything [will] be the same."

However, Davoud couldn't shake his feelings of restlessness and discontentment. He had recurring daydreams in which he was drawn to a group of people sitting in a circle. When they realized someone was approaching, the group stood up and turned to him.

He decided not to seek professional help. He was afraid people would think him crazy, which is how he felt, but his experience as a filmmaker helped him resolve the mysterious dream.

"I figured out that I can do something in that dream," Davoud recalled. "I can act. Until that day, I was the audience of a movie but as soon as I figured this out, I started shouting and yelling. 'What do you want from me? Who are you people?'"

The circle parted, and a man with an intent look asked him, "Have you suffered more than I have?" Davoud said he real-

ized "with all the cells of my body" that he was receiving a spiritual message.

He wanted to be sure what it meant, so he consulted a Christian friend. The friend congratulated him for receiving a personal invitation from the One he had been trying to introduce Davoud to for a long time.

This time, Davoud accepted God's invitation. "After that, I did not feel depressed anymore," he said.

## The struggle

Davoud has learned that being asked, "Have you suffered more than I have?" didn't just pertain to his salvation but also to his Christian life, which wouldn't always be easy. "God came to save me from my spiritual problems but you can still encounter problems in life in Iran, especially if you become a Christian," Davoud said.

There is a saying in Iran that being a Christian isn't a problem unless you're an active one. "If you try to give people [the] Holy Bible, if you have a place, a room for Christian books, if you openly invite people to Christianity and do other things helping people to get to know Jesus Christ, you are considered an active Christian," Davoud explained. "If you have a house church, you are an active Christian. If you help people to get baptized, you are an active Christian."

Davoud and Susan had to leave Iran or risk imprisonment when some of those forbidden activities were discovered. Within less than a week they made arrangements and left behind almost everything they had. They are now seeking refugee status in another country. They still face restrictions about what they can do and where they can go.

Davoud longs to practice his art again. Susan sometimes wonders why rebuilding their lives is such a struggle, but they refuse to surrender to



**STRUGGLING IN IRAN** — An Iranian woman wearing a traditional chador (black cloak) and two children pause to look out onto the Zayandeh River from an archway on the Si-o-Seh (33 Arches) Bridge in Esfahan, Iran. As Iranians struggle politically against a corrupt, theocratic government, the struggle for Christian faith in this officially Islamic country is just as real. (BP photo courtesy of the International Mission Board)

self-pity. They are active in a house church.

"When you read Acts, you don't find yourself lonely," Davoud said. "so we [Iranian Christians] are experiencing this truth, that our Lord was tortured, He was insulted, and

He was [put to death] in the most brutal way.

"We are His followers."

**Editor's note:** To view video and photos about the peoples of Iran, visit <http://www.commissionstories.com/?p=153>.

## Life Digest: U.S. abortionists plan international promotion

WASHINGTON, D.C. (BP) — Planned Parenthood has hired a U.S. State Department official to advocate for abortion overseas in the wake of a restoration of federal funding for organizations that promote or perform the procedure internationally.

Jeff Meer, who has served as a career foreign service officer at the State Department and participated in three international population conferences, is the new director of international advocacy for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA). The announcement was made in a June 15 e-mail to PPFA supporters by Veena Siddharth, vice president of international programs, LifeNews.com reported.

In January, President Obama rescinded the Mexico City Policy, which prohibited international family planning organizations from receiving federal

funds unless they agreed not to perform or counsel for abortion or lobby in order to liberalize the pro-life policies of foreign governments.

PPFA is the United States' No. 1 abortion provider. Its affiliates performed more than 305,000 abortions in 2007, the most recent year for which statistics are available. The organization's total revenue reached \$1.04 billion in the most recent financial year, which extended from July 2007 to June 2008. More than \$349 million of that figure came in government grants and contracts.

Local PPFA affiliates have been caught on tape numerous times in recent years offering to facilitate abortions for underage girls and otherwise circumvent legal restrictions on abortion.

At least one abortion rights leader has decried President Obama's call for com-

mon ground on the issue. In his May 17 graduation speech at the University of Notre Dame, the president encouraged people on both sides of the abortion issue to be open-minded in hopes of finding "at least the possibility of common ground."

Carlton Veazey, president of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, said "common ground" is "another term for compromise on reproductive choice. In other words, achieving common ground will be accomplished by diminishing the ability of women to make decisions about abortion, whatever the personal cost. That's unacceptable."

"It's unacceptable for even one woman to suffer in order for opponents of abortion to be appeased. ... We should not sacrifice women's lives in the service of calming controversy and tempering anger over an issue that has become political," Veazey

wrote on a weblog for RH (reproductive health) Reality Check.

Young people are expressing their opinions on abortion on a new social networking online site is seeking to produce a generation of pro-life teenagers.

Teens for Life ([www.teensforlife.com](http://www.teensforlife.com)) provides a variety of features to help teens learn about abortion, as well as other sanctity of life issues, and to take a stand for the pro-life cause.

"This is the first time that the pro-life movement has actively embraced the power of social networking for the purpose of raising up a new generation of leaders," said Mike Fichter, the site's editor. "The future of the pro-life movement is here, and we're giving it a voice of its own."

Teens for Life is a national outreach of the Indiana Right to Life Education Fund.